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apple river canyon

STATE PARK

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THE PARK

Apple River Canyon State Park is in the hilly northwest part of Illinois in Jo Daviess County near the Wisconsin border. This scenic canyon area was formed by the action of the winding waters of Apple River. Limestone bluffs, deep ravines, springs, streams and wildlife characterize this area which was once part of a vast sea bottom that stretched from the Alleghenies to the Rockies.

The 297-acre park was purchased by the State of Illinois in 1932.

HISTORY

Joutel, who was in the Mississippi Valley in 1687 and who was later to record LaSalle's expedition, wrote tales of Indian lead mines told by travelers to the "Upper Mississippi." The first white man to see the lead mines was Nicholas Perrot, a French trader who settled on the east side of the Mississippi in 1690. The first to exploit them was a Scotch adventurer, John Law. His Company of the West, founded in Paris in 1717 on the fraudulent claim that the Illinois lead mines were well-developed, collapsed with a thud which was heard all over France and went down in history as the "Mississippi Bubble."

In the nineteenth century American settlers arrived, the Sauk and Fox Indians were driven out in the Black Hawk War and Galena, thriving on the profits of lead mining, became a roaring boom town. Miners by the hundreds entered this country through a canyon which is now one of the principal attractions of Apple River Canyon State Park.

The town of Millville was established where the park is now, but not a trace of it remains. Named after its two sawmills, Millville became a stop on the Galena-Chicago stage route and flourished until 1854 when the Illinois Central Railroad, building its line from Freeport to Galena, passed four miles north of the town. In 1892 a devastating flood washed out the dam, swept away many buildings and drove out the people of the town forever.

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THE NATURAL SCENE

Flowing endlessly for countless centuries, the Apple River has cut through the masses of limestone, dolomite and shale until massive cliffs now rise high above the water and canyons have formed. Vast ages of water and erosion widened and deepened the crevices as rivers and streams cut their way through the stone. Close-up views of the colorful canyon reveal walls dotted with mosses, lichens and tenacious bushes which have found crevices to hold their roots on the sheer walls.

The glacial sweep which ironed out hills and filled valleys in other parts of the state left this area unscratched. This circumstance accounts for the large number of fossil remains to be found near the surface here. It also was responsible for the easy availability of the lead veins that had much to do with the early development of this section of Illinois.

Charles Mound: From atop the Apple River bluffs may be seen the highest point in Illinois, Charles



Mound, which is 1,241 feet above sea level. The bluffs also command an excellent view of the deciduous forests which include some juniper and an occasional white pine, along with about 60 other varieties of hard and soft woods.

The park contains such wildlife as deer, squirrels, rabbits, raccoons, eagles, hawks and 47 varieties of birds. At least 14 different ferns and over 500 different herbaceous plants and 165 varieties of flowers can be seen throughout the park.

FACILITIES

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Picnicking: Four picnic areas with tables, drinking water and toilets are along the river's banks. Cooking may be done on camp or park stoves. Playground equipment is provided in the camping and main picnic areas.

Concession Stand: Located near the main picnic area, the stand offers a variety of refreshments and supplies.

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Camping: In addition to primitive sites, the park offers trailer sites with a sanitary station. Camping permits must be obtained from the park staff. A group camping area is also available; groups of over 25 persons must have advance permission to enter the park.

Fishing: The Apple River has a variety of fish including small mouth bass, sunfish, crappie, carp and suckers. In early spring the Illinois Department of Conservation stocks Apple River with keeper-size trout. The river is one of several in the state where the department releases this fish. Trout require clean, clear, cold water and in the spring Apple River meets these requirements. However, the fish do not live through the hot summer months, so the stream is stocked on a put-and-take basis.

Boating is not permitted on the Apple River.

Trails: Five trails—Pine Ridge, Tower Rock, River Route, Sunset and Primrose Lane—wind through the woods for several miles within the park.

Winter Sports: Ice fishing is allowed when the ice is thick enough. Sledding along the rolling hills is also popular.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION . . .

Admittance will not be granted groups of 25 or more persons to any state park or conservation area unless permission from the park ranger has been secured to use the facilities. It is also required that groups of minors have adequate supervision and that at least one responsible adult accompany each group not exceeding 15 minors. All pets must be on a leash.

Numerous state parks and memorials are within easy access of every part of the state. Lodges, cabins and dining rooms are important features of Illinois Beach, Starved Rock, Pere Marquette, White Pines Forest and Giant City. Reservations for lodging should be made with lodge managers.

All state parks are open the year round. When weather conditions necessitate the closing of park roads during freezing and thawing periods, access to park facilities is by foot only.

For more details, contact Ranger, Apple River, 61001, phone 815/745-3302. For information on other Illinois sites, write the Department of Conservation, Information/Education Section, State Office Building, Springfield, 62706.

Park Maps



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